

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 11320 030054Z

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ACTION SCS-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SCA-01 DHA-02 L-03 H-02 NSC-05

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHCC IMMEDIATE 7176

INFO AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ

AMCONSUL GUADALAJARA

AMCONSUL HERMOSILLO

AMCONSUL MATAMOROS VIA POUCH

AMCONSUL MAZATLAN VIA POUCH

AMCONSUL MONTERREY

AMCONSUL NUEVO LAREDO VIA POUCH

AMCONSUL TIJUANA VIA POUCH

AMCONSUL MERIDA VIA POUCH

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: CASC MX

SUBJECT: PROPOSED HUNGER STRIKE BY PRISONERS - VISIT TO ORIENTE
PRISON

REF MEXICO 10963

1. CONSUL GENERAL AND CHIEF OF CONSULAR SECTION CALLED ON
LIC. FERNANDO GARCIA CORDERO, DIRECTOR OF RECLUSORIO DEL
ORIENTE AUGUST 31 TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS AT NEW PRISON AND
ESPECIALLY PROPOSED HUNGER STRIKE BY AMERICAN PRISONERS.
GARCIA CORDERO READILY AGREED TO REQUEST THAT CONOFFS MEET
WITH ALL 45 AMERICAN PRISONERS AT ORIENTE IN SMALL GROUPS
TO INTRODUCE NEW CONSUL GENERAL AND OFFER LOW KEY OPPORTUNITY
TO DISCUSS PROPOSED STRIKE. HE WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO
EXTEND EVERY COURTESY AND FACILITATIVE ASSISTANCE FOR
DISCUSSIONS.

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PAGE 02 MEXICO 11320 030054Z

2. GARCIA CORDERO IS YOUNG, HIGHLY-TRAINED PROFESSIONAL

WHO APPEARS SINCERELY DEDICATED TO WELFARE OF PRISONERS AND TO CONCEPT OF PRISONER REHABILITATION. HE IS FACED WITH MANY ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS DURING THIS SETTLING-IN PERIOD, WHEN NEW FACILITY IS NOT YET COMPLETE AND HIS ENTIRELY NEW STAFF MUST BE TRAINED(THERE WERE NO HOLDOVERS FROM LECUMBERRI). HE IS CONFIDENT, HOWEVER, THAT IN TIME HE WILL HAVE A REHABILITATIVE INSTITUTION OPERATED ON HUMANE AND PROGRESSIVE PRINCIPLES. HE THOUGHT THAT THE AMERICAN PRISONERS WERE ADJUSTING REASONABLY WELL TO THE MOVE, AND ATTRIBUTED THIS IN PART TO THE FACT THAT HE HAD WORKED WITH THEM OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS AS DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF LECUMBERRI UNDER THE REFORM ADMINISTRATION. (IN LATER DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRISONERS, ALL EXPRESSED A HIGH REGARD FOR THE DIRECTOR.)

3. GARCIA CORDERO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE HUNGER STRIKE AND INQUIRED WHAT THE EMBASSY PROPOSED TO DO ABOUT IT. HE IS CONCERNED THAT THE STRIKE AND THE PUBLICITY RESULTING FROM IT MAY IMPEDE THE PROGRESS WHICH THE TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEGUN TO MAKE TOWARD IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF THE PRISONERS. HE SUGGESTED THAT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH PRISONERS, CONOFFS PASS ON HIS BELIEF THAT THINGS ARE NOW MOVING ALONG THE RIGHT PATH FOR THE PRISONERS, AND IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THEY BY THEIR ACTIONS NOT FORCE THINGS OFF COURSE.

4. THE TALKS WITH THE PRISONERS, WHICH LASTED FOR OVER THREE HOURS, WENT VERY WELL. THEY WERE OBVIOUSLY PLEASED BY THE VISIT, AND REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR REGULAR DISCUSSIONS OF THIS TYPE (TO SUPPLEMENT INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH CONSULAR OFFICERS.) QUESTION OF PROPOSED TRANSFER OF SANCTIONS WAS BROACHED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY WITH EACH SUCCESSIVE GROUP, AS THEY WERE OBVIOUSLY EAGER FOR NEWS ON THIS SUBJECT. MOST WERE SKEPTICAL OF ASSURANCES THAT THE TWO GOVERNMENTS ARE MOVING AS QUICKLY ON PROPOSAL AS IS POSSIBLE WITH NEGOTIATIONS OF THIS TYPE. MANY ARE STILL UNREALISTIC ABOUT RESULTS WHICH MIGHT BE EXPECTED FROM A TRANSFER OF SANCTIONS AGREEMENT. THE DOMINANT MOOD IS THAT THEY FEEL THEY HAVE SUFFERED ENOUGH, FROM MISTREATMENT AT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MEXICO 11320 030054Z

TIME OF ARREST, ABUSE AND EXTORTION AT LECUMBERRI, CORRUPTION AND INCOMPLETENESS OF LAWYERS AND COURTS, AND OVERLY STIFF SENTENCES. THEY NOW WANT REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES, RELEASE IN THE UNITED STATES, NOT JUST THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE THEIR 7-TO-12 YEAR SENTENCES IN U.S. PRISONS.

5. ISSUED OF PROPOSED HUNGER STRIKE AROSE LATE IN THE

DISCUSSIONS, RAISED BY THE PRISONERS ONLY AFTER THEY APPARENTLY HAD TESTED CREDIBILITY OF CONOFFS WITH OTHER QUESTIONS. THE GREAT MAJORITY OF PRISONERS AT ORIENTE APPEAR COMMITTED TO THE STRIKE - THE LEADERS CLAIM 100 PERCENT SUPPORT. THE MOTIVATION FOR THE STRIKE IS TO AROUSE PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC SYMPATHY FOR THEIR CAUSE, THUS PUTTING AS MUCH PRESSURE AS POSSIBLE UPON USG AND GOM TO RESOLVE THE PRISONER PROBLEM. SOME PRISONERS REALIZE THAT LITTLE MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED, BUT FEEL IMPELLED TO CONTINUE WITH THE STRIKE ON GROUNDS OF PRINCIPLE - AS A PROTEST AGAINST VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH HAVE GONE UNREDRESSED. OTHERS - PERHAPS THE MAJORITY - BELIEVE THEY CAN IMPEL THE US GOVERNMENT INTO STRONGER ACTION BY THIS METHOD, AND ARE UNWILLING TO BELIEVE THE U.S. CANNOT EXERT MORE INFLUENCE OVER THE GOM. NONE OF THE ARGUMENTS USED BY CONOFFS (OUTLINED REFTEL) WERE ACCEPTED.

6. WHILE THERE APPEARS TO BE NO WAY OF AVERTING STRIKE NOW, WE ARE NOT SURE THAT MAJORITY OF PRISONERS AT ORIENTE WILL CONTINUE WITH STRIKE BEYOND THE FIRST FEW DAYS OF WEEK. ON THE OTHER HAND, SOME OF THE MORE DETERMINED PRISONERS APPEAR NOW TO BE IN A MOOD OF "WHAT HAVE WE GO TO LOSE?" FIND THE CONCEPT OF MARTYRDOM FOR A CAUSE APPEALING.

7 VISITS TO LOS REYES, SANTA MARTA, AND RECLUSORIO DEL NORTE ARE SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 2 AND 3.
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